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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

21 December 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Near East and
South Asia

SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Assessment: Near East and South Asia

1. The continuing confrontation between the United States and Iran, other anti-US manifestations in the Muslim world, and what appears to be a major escalation of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan have raised fundamental questions about the prospects for US interests in this troubled region. Near East and South Asia intelligence analysts represented at this month's meeting on 19 December felt that the Intelligence Community had been providing warning on key issues but that they might usefully emphasize their concern on several particular issues.

2. Pakistan. Because of the poor state of US-Pak relations, the Soviet buildup in Afghanistan and consequent intimidation of Pakistan, and the provocative posture of Iran, representatives felt that Pakistan was under pressure to reach a modus vivendi with its neighbors and the Soviet Union that would hurt US interests in the region. The "worst case" vision of the future elicited by our exchange included an Afghanistan under total Soviet domination, evolution of events in Iran leading to predominant leftist strength, and a Pakistan unable and perhaps unwilling to withstand pressures to break entirely from the United States.

3. Afghanistan. The judgments made in the recent Alert Memorandum were reaffirmed by the representatives. However, it was emphasized that the integrity and reliability of the Afghan military were in serious question and that the collapse of the armed forces would bring down the regime. Soviet concern over this possibility might explain, at least in

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part, the recent large-scale buildup of Soviet forces adjacent to Afghanistan. This analytic line was not featured in the Alert Memorandum and, although these judgments were not fully accepted by all those at the meeting, many subscribed to them.

4. Iran-Iraq. Relations between Iran and Iraq are deteriorating rapidly. Both sides have begun supporting dissident groups against the other and are engaging in a virulent propaganda war. Iraq has issued several ultimatums to Iran warning it against further harassment of Iraqi citizens and has threatened to withdraw its diplomats from Tehran. There have also been several small border incidents. Barring some last minute concessions by one side, a rupture in diplomatic relations appears likely. Iraq, moreover, may soon demand unacceptable border revisions in the 1975 Algiers Accord, particularly in the sensitive Shatt-al-Arab area. Neither side apparently wants to initiate a full scale military conflict at this time, but Baghdad appears inclined to demonstrate its resolve and frustration by limited military incursions. The primary dangers in the situation, should tensions escalate, are disruption of oil production in one or both countries, possible increased danger to the American hostages in Tehran, and further destabilization of the Middle East.

5. Iranian Volunteers to Lebanon. The arrival of some 40 Iranian volunteers in Syria on their way to fight alongside Muslims in southern Lebanon, and the prospect of as many as a thousand finding their way into the troubled area could upset the relative calm that has existed since late August. None of the key players -- Syrians, Lebanese officials, Lebanese Shias, and even some Iranian officials -- wants the volunteers to enter southern Lebanon, yet none has had the resolve to challenge the venture. The Israelis are not likely to tolerate another uncontrollable element of any size and would react to an influx of Iranians in ways that could well rekindle the southern Lebanon crisis.

6. Syrian Domestic Stability. Sectarian violence in Syria increased over the past several weeks in northern Syria, and Syrian authorities have sent special security troops to the northern city of Aleppo. The Aleppo area is supposed to be an area of Iraqi influence, thus trouble there suggests Iraq has resumed support of opposition groups in Syria. The inability of the Syrian regime to stop terrorist activity even during the recent period when relations with Iraq were good indicates the Syrians will be facing an even more dangerous challenge if Iraq has, indeed, entered the fray.

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